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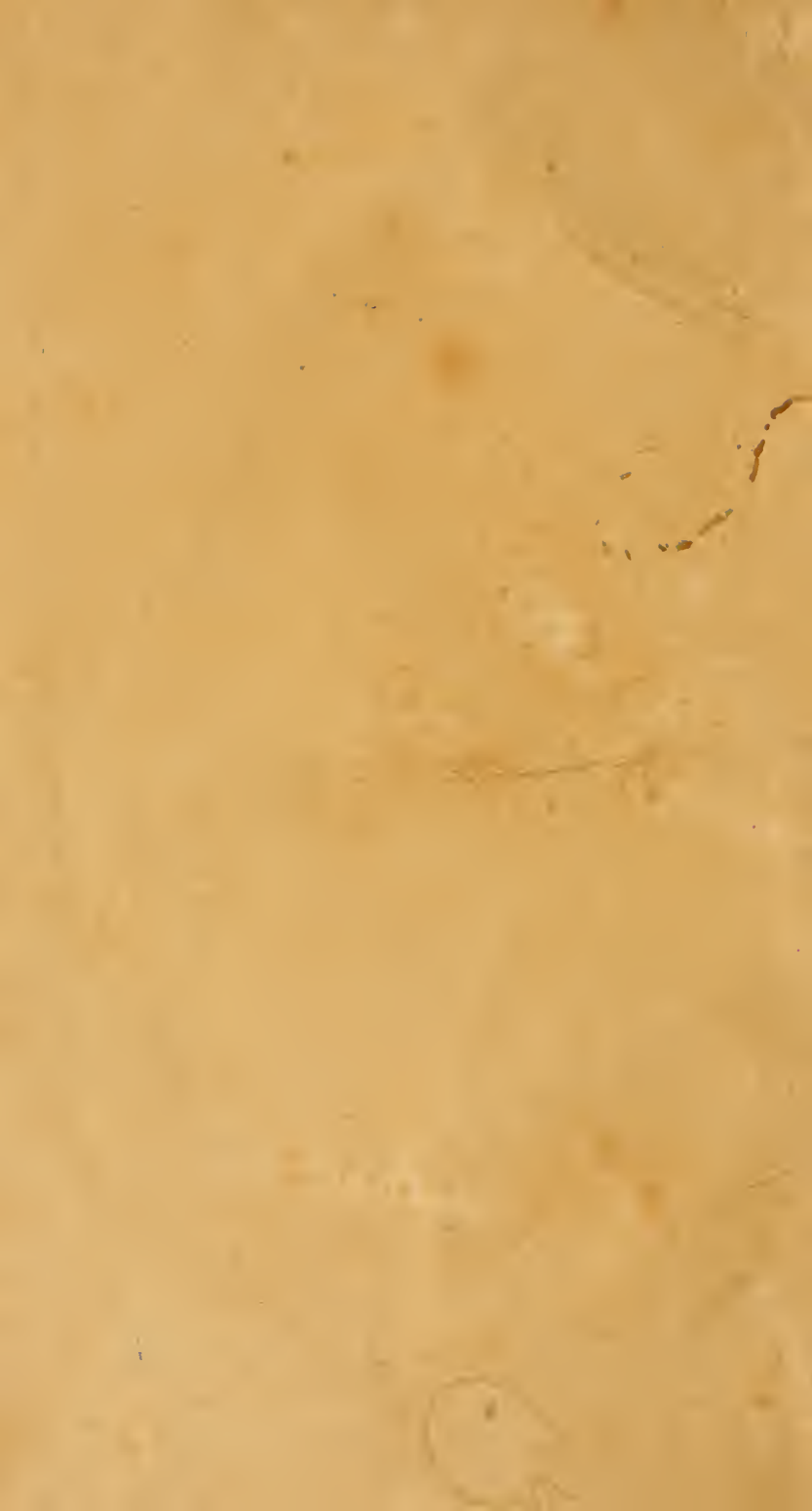
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BRIEF SKETCH

OF THE FIRST SETTLEMENT

OF THE

COUNTY OF SCHOHARIE,

BY THE GERMANS:

*Being an Answer to a Circular Letter, addressed to the Author,
by "The Historical and Philosophical Society
of the State of New-York."*

BY JOHN M. BROWN.

SCHOHARIE

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR, BY L. CUTHBERT.

.....
1823.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Author begs leave to submit the following pages to the Public, all written from his own memory ; being well aware that it cannot, in every instance be perfectly correct. But finding that so valuable a part of history as the emigration of the Germans from Germany—their journey—arrival at New-York, and their settlement and improvement of Schoharie would be lost, time wearing out memory, therefore hoping and expecting that future generations yet to come, may be benefitted by his labour, is the ardent wish of your humble servant,

JOHN M BROWN.

Carlisle, Schoharie County, November 20th, 1823.

HISTORY, &c.

RESPECTED DEAR FRIEND,

SIR—

VERY unexpected I received your Circular Letter, pointedly directed to me. I took on myself to answer the compliment: but with pain and reluctance I take up my pen to answer your request—not because I have been an idle observer or spectator of the revolutions of times and events; neither of that I have forgotten what I knew, heard or seen, or has in any wise come to my view or comprehension—but on account of not being a scholar, and that I never had an opportunity of reading a geography in my life; so that perhaps I take not the right meaning of the request, and so make an answer to no purpose, as also that my nature, through the poverty of my parents, is not cultivated to any promising degree.

I was born at the Blue Mountain, Ulster County, in the year of our Lord, 1745, November 5th, Old Style; lost my mother at 18 months old, then brought up by my grandfather, Matthew Junck, at West Camp, so called, because the first Germans that came over, sent by Queen Anne to America, in the year 1712, encamped, and wintered in ground huts the winter ensuing. My grandfather used to teach a German School three or four months every winter, until the year 1752, then quit, when I was seven years old. He was the first that taught school among all the Germans in America. He was a very perfect good reader and singer in the German Low Dutch and English, but a very poor writer, and knew no arithmetic at all. Hence I date all my education I ever had.

My father re-married this year at Schoharie, to a widow who owned a small property of ten acres of land, and about £110 in money; sat up his trade of a Wheelwright. He was the first that followed that business in all Schoharie, and also made the first Cider-press in the whole

town, being now in the year 1753. Schools were then principally taught in the German and Low Dutch.

In the year 1757, then in the French war, my father fetched me up to Schoharie and put me to his trade ; with whom I continually lived, and followed his profession until I was twenty-four years old. Schools now began alternately to be introduced in English.

Schoharie then was a part of the county of Albany, situated thirty-six miles to the west, without even a privilege of a Supervisor, until at or about the year 1765. The supervisor had to be chosen in Albany, and to be a resident of the Corporation until this time.

Schoharie then contained (note in the year 1752, but 104 houses, making up about 125 families. The greatest number Germans of those aforesaid, and about one third Low Dutch from Schenectady and Normanskill ; altogether by a guess, about 875 souls ;) which same ground now occupies 4638 electors, and 19.323 people, amazing increase ! At that time the Indians consisted in about a quarter of the whole population. They were then outlaws ; naturally inclined to revenge and murder against the white people and among themselves. A Squaw shot & killed one a step-father of Johannes Acker, on a Sunday, when returning from meeting. They continued in that practice until the commencement of the Revolutionary war : In my time I saw one William, a son of Jan, stab and kill another at the house of David Becker in Wisersdorp. After this, another stabbed and killed a negroman, a drummer to Capt. Van Arnein's company, at the Helleberg, at the house of Isaac Cole, on a training day : And the very same Indian very shortly after, stabbed and killed an Indian in Cobleskill, in the house of George Ferster, on the place where Lambert Lawyer now lives. This was done at the time I lived where I now do.

Schoharie, so called by an Indian name, from a creek by the Indians called Skochalie, which runs from east to west, and falls into the Schoharie River at a place formerly called Wisersdorp, (now the town of Middleburgh,) then down north, till it falls in the Mohawk River, at Fort Hunter, now called Caghawaga.

Schoharie was first inhabited by a French Indian prisoner; married to a Mohawk Squaw. His name was Karigondonte, whose father-in-law sent him there, and gave him land, for fear that the Mohawk Indians would kill him when they got drunk, and gave him land, as the Mohawk bore a great enmity to the French.

Other Indians, Mohawk, Mohegan, Discarora, Delaware, and Onidas, flocked to him, so that he increased to a nation to about three hundred strong, and established chiefs among them; who then pretended to be the owners of all that vast territory of land, and granted conveyances thereof.

Queen Anne having intended to settle America, sent her agent to purchase land from the natives; for which purpose she sent messengers to Germany, to invite people to come over and settle, and promised that they should have the land they possessed, free. In consequence whereof, many came over; and a purchase was made, beginning near little Schoharie creek, at high water mark of the big Schoharie River, and at an oak stump, burned out hollow by the Indians to serve for stamping their corn; where a stone heap was erected which stands to this day. The Indian seal of a Turtle and a Snake was cut on the stump, (here I must digress a little, and mention that the said stump or stamp block, served the Germans for their first grist-mill,) from thence down to the north, including all the low land on both sides of the creek, for the space of about eight miles, containing 20,000 acres.

These Indians claimed the right of a different nation: as they had now become a mixture of several nations, claimed all the adjoining wild land about Schoharie—began to sell from tract to tract, until nearly at, or about the year 1763 or 64, when they got to be interrupted by the Mohawk nation, who insisted and proved, by the hearsay of their forefathers, that they had no right to any more land; as was given to Karigh Ondonte's wife, which was to be measured by the planting of so much corn, as a Squaw could hold in her petticoat; by our measure reckoned about a skipple.

After this time the Mohawk nation claimed all the land till unto the Susquehannah River, and down the river as far as a creek called the Scenevers creek; so called from the name of an Indian who used to lay and hunt there, and for the very remarkable and unnatural circumstance that happened, namely:—he and his father lay on a hunt there, and a deep snow fell; they concluded to return to Schoharie—began their march, and travelled one day—they kindled their fire and slept—the next morning started again: the old man got tired after travelling a while—returned back again—his son missing his father, returned also—finding his father at the place they had slept, had kindled the fire again, setting and warming himself—took his hatchet, and knocked him on the head, which caused his death: after which he buried him, as he said, under the snow. On this Scenevers creek is now the town of Wooster, belonging to the county of Otsego

The Mohawk Indians after establishing their claims, began to make several large sales thereof, to Sir William Johnson and others, until all was sold, their castles, settlements and improvements only excepted

These Indians were of a loyal disposition, and assisted Great Britain by all possible means, to conquer Canada in the last French war, and continued so. In the year 1775, they made it fully appear that they were loyal; they proved a displeasure to our revolutionary war—called it a rebellion and disobedience to their King and Father.

At this time an Indian treaty was called of all the Six Nations, to be held at the German Flats; the very place where the Court-House of the county of Herkimer now stands. Gen. Philip Schuyler was the commissioner for the convention of America, delegated with full power to settle an amicable treaty with the Six Nations; wherein it was agreed and particularly stipulated, that the Indians should keep at peace, and not meddle with the controversy. After being three weeks well fed, and receiving many great presents, they retired home:—almost at their arrival, they found the King's agents, sowing tearse amongst them namely, Tory seed. They broke the treaty, and

joined the British, excepting only a few: the Oneida tribe remained true to the treaty, and some of them joined the American forces.

At this treaty a very remarkable instance took place, namely: the yellow fever broke out amongst the Indians, a sickness they never saw, nor were acquainted with before, and which destroyed a great many. The Karigh Oudonte tribe, or Schoharie Indians, with whom I was best acquainted, were hereby almost exterminated. The few that remained, being naturally very superstitious, supposed that the Great Spirit was mad with them, for not joining their King; so joined the Tories and went to Canada, from whence they often returned, together with other Indians—made incursions on our frontiers—killed, murdered, scalped, burnt and took prisoners; even their former neighbors with whom they were well acquainted, so that there were but few houses left within forty miles of Albany.

Since I have now so far digressed, I think it not at all amiss, here to relate some remarkable occurrences, namely:—That the first Indian that was killed in our revolutionary war, was by Lieut. Jacob Borst, of Cobleskill.—The Indian's name was Oness Yaap, a mixed offspring of the Karigh Oudonte tribe. Here I will relate the particular circumstances in detail.

On the first day of June or July in the year 1776, my brother, Capt. Christian Brown, sent his Lieut. Jacob Borst and brother Joseph Borst, on a scout down to the Scenevers creek aforementioned, to the Susquehannah river. And as they there discovered nothing, returned back as far as the upper branch of the Cobleskill creek, where they were first alarmed by something like the yell of an owl, yet somewhat different; but immediately saw two Indians jumping up the bank of the creek, and making towards them. Lieut. Borst immediately took a tree, his brother being about fifteen paces behind. The two Indians directly spread, so that no tree would shelter him; if it did from the one, it would expose him to the other.—He resolved to stand free and wait for them to come up; consequently they came, one against him, the other a-

gainst his brother, making great exclamations against them for being in the woods, and so shoot Indians who did them no harm: Joseph Borst replied, that they meant not to shoot Indians that would not shoot them. By this time Hansyerry, a son of Seth, (one of the Karigh Ondote Chiefs.) came up to him, seized the muzzle of his gun, gave it a twitch, and knocked open the pan, saying these words—"Yo yenery its hatste," signifying, its good if this begone. Borst, with ready presence of mind, and good resolution, dropped his own gun, and clinched the Indian's piece—took hold and twisted the flint out of the cock, and then replied in Mohawk—"Yo yenery it sagat," that is to say, It is good that this is just so. On this, the Indian clinched Borst with a lion-like fury. Borst, not in the least daunted, but with good resolution, also took a rash hold, gave a hearty Indian whoop, which took away half of the Indian's strength, and soon brought him down on his knees. At this time a shot fell behind his back; the Indian almost naked, striving to extricate himself from Borst's hands, now slipt loose, run off, leaving his gun in the lodge. Lieut. Borst by this time had finished the best part of his business with the other Indian; ran up to his brother and picked up his gun; shut the pan, and aimed at the Indian now in full run, and snapped; so Hansyerry escaped at this time. But in a year and a half after, was killed with his own axe, together with others, and a brother of his, named Hanelie, severely wounded, by one Mr. Sawyer and Mr. Cowley, whom they had taken prisoners at Harpersfield; and were about to carry them prisoners to Niagara: who, on the eleventh night arose against their masters, killed three and wounded a fourth, who run off; so they made their escape, and returned back in sixteen days.

Lieut. Borst now also stood in every way exposed.—Oness Yaap aforesaid, came up and demanded him to surrender prisoner; he made one step back, and with this cocked his firelock, and replied, 'Yaghte'; which is to say, No—then drew his trigger, shot him through the body and broke his back bone: so left him lay and made off. On this very spot, on the next day, the first battle was

fought in our revolutionary war against the Indians, by Capt Brown, with twenty-two of his militia, and a Continental Lieutenant, whose name, I am sorry, I never was acquainted with, together with thirty Continentals. The first had five killed and three wounded; the latter had nine killed, five wounded, and two missing, among the first being their valuable officer. This happened one day before the massacre of Wyoming. The Indians, by their own account 450 strong, killed and destroyed all the cattle and horses they could not easily take along—burned every building in their reach—remained one day and two nights in the adjoining woods, to dress their wounded and pack up their provision and plunder, and so went off.

Now I must return to the very history of Schoharie.

Queen Anne had caused her proclamation to be carried through all Germany, inviting people to come over to settle the New World, promising there to give them lands gratis; and that they should all be free, or have and enjoy freedom. O! liberty was sweet: that they like Abraham of old, left their fathers, friends and relations; and in the year 1710, on New-Year's day, started for the unknown land: went down the river Rhine, where they were provided with shipping to Holland: from thence to England, and there provided, so went on to America. They had a very tedious voyage: a great many died, and the remainder landed at New-York, in the year 1712, on the 11th day of June, after having been one year, five months, and several days on their journey.

New-York then went by the name of Monades, so called by the Hollanders. They were then sent up Hudson's river, to East and West Camp, so called, because the first Germans encamped and wintered there in ground and log huts. From thence broke up in the next spring, and went up to Albany, then called Fort Orange. The city, or rather village, was called the Foyek, but by the Indians was called Schogneghtaday, the most of the whole being Indian traders, and altogether of the Low Dutch. From thence, being provided by order of Queen Anne, with provisions and tools on their backs, started and travelled

by an Indian foot path four days, before they reached Schoharie.

Here it will be well to relate, that on the third day there was a meeting, and their whole camp fell a fighting, on a hill called Fegtberg until this day ; where now is a village in the town of Bern, called Pucker-street. On the fourth day they were in sight of Schoharie—concluded now to have a general wash—found a brook and water—then fell to work : and as they were a washing, the lice were a swimming down the brook ; whence that brook is called Licekill until this very day.

Now being safe arrived in the first week, after three children were born, namely, Johanes Earhart, Wilhelmus Bouck and Elizabeth Lawyer, they found the land good, and much of the flats clear. The Indians, who were all the people they found, having sluffed, they went to work and planted corn, which they got of the natives ; and in working the ground with their broad hoes, they found a potatoe-like root, which they called earth acorns : also another, they called earth beans, which they cooked or roasted, and so served them for food.

In the fall of 1713, Lambert Sternbergh carried a spint of wheat along the Indian foot path from Schenectady to Schoharie ; there sowed or rather planted it over more than an acre of ground, which grew well ; and the next year he reaped and thrashed it, and measured 83 skipple out of it. This was the first wheat ever raised in Schoharie ; and by about 40 years after, it was reckoned that one year in another, they carried 36,000 skipple to Albany.

Now the new inhabitants soon began to think themselves well off. By their industry, and great fertility of the soil, they soon got plenty to eat—wore moggisins—buckskin breeches and jackets of leather, which they plentifully obtained of the Indians. Nine of them owned the first horse, which was a gray. But now a new and very great difficulty was felt : they had no grist-mills ; no teams ; no horses ; no roads fit for passage, but Indian foot-paths. They stamped, and also peeled their corn by help of lye, and then cooked it to eat. Their wheat they carried to Schenectady to grind, a space of nineteen miles,

every man about a skipple to his load : sometimes there would go twenty in a drove, often men and women together. This they had to do for three or four years, until a grist-mill was built by one Willam Fox.

By now, the people began to think themselves very well off, having plenty to eat, began to have stock—used horses—made their own block sleighs for use at home, and wooden shod sleighs to go to Albany ; but knew of no british collars, (which were an invention of Schenectady ;) made a trip to Albany—back again in five days. Their wagons for summer use, were made of blocks sawed off, of a thick water beach tree, which we now call button wood. All was very well now ; they had no law to fear, and full as little Gospel to trouble them. But as they dwelt in a world of trouble, their peace was of no long direction, for a new one and a mighty great one was born. Ignorance may be said was the mother ; she brought forth twin upon twin, so that she damped all hopes of their ever doing well in Schoharie any more. Some pulled up stakes, of which the German flats were settled : Others went down to the Susquehannah, and down to Pennsylvania, by which the Mill-Creek in Torpehahen has been peopled.

The great evil they saw was this : here I cannot pass by, without exposing the mighty stupidity and black ignorance of my German brethren, in order to do justice to the truth. Queen Anne supposed that her Germans by this time, might be handsomely settled, sent her agent, by the name of Nicholas Bayard, a man who had lost one eye, with full power to give a deed to every man of whatsoever land he did possess, provided he made known his boundaries. Mr. Bayard was the grandfather of Stephen M. Bayard, now living in Albany or Schenectady, with whom I have conversed ; and he did yet remember of this transaction.

Mr. Bayard came to Schoharie, put up at the house of Hansyerry Smidt, from whence he issued his order, that every householder should bring in the boundaries of his possession, and receive his deed. But the poor ignorant souls, struck like with thunder, supposed it to be a trick, to get themselves and children under that hateful yoke of

tyrannic land holders, to be again enslaved forever, and had now for some years tasted perfect liberty, resolved to kill the agent and die free.

On the next morning they arose all like one man—surrounded the house of Smith, some weaponed with guns, some with pitch-forks—women with hoes, and others with clubs, demanding Mr. Bayard alive or dead: on refusal, fired sixty balls through the roof of the house, which was all the ammunition they had. Mr. Bayard was well armed with pistols, sometimes fired back, but did no execution. Night came on, and they left the house. Mr. Bayard left the house, and in dark of the night, travelled 20 miles to Schenectady: from thence he again sent a message, that if any man should appear, and acknowledge him to be the King's agent, with the gift of one ear of corn, he so doing should have a free deed of all his possession. Mr. Bayard waited for some time, but not one did appear.

Mr. Bayard, no doubt, felt crusty, as he could do nothing with those fools; went to Albany and sold the whole to seven partners. I will name such as I remember, to wit:—Rut Van Dam, Lewis Morris, Myndert Schuyler, Peter Vanburg Livingston, and three others, who afterwards went by the name of the Seven Partners of Schoharie.

Schoharie now soon found out that there was a new band at the bellows. They were soon called upon take leases and to pay rent, or to purchase. They refused all. The seven partners seeing they could gain nothing, tho't about trying the law: sent their Sheriff, by the name of Adams, to apprehend the most principal men and ring-leaders of the whole, to bring them to terms of justice.—But when the Sheriff began to meddle with the first man, a mob of women rose, of which Magdalene Zee was captain. He was knocked down, and dragged through every mud-pool in the street; then hung on a rail and carried four miles, thrown down on a bridge, where the captain took a stake out of the fence, and struck him in the side, that she broke two of his ribs, and lost one eye; then she pressed in his face, let him lie and went off.

Poor Adams, bruised and wounded as he was, had no other way left, but to help himself as well as he was able; made himself up and made for Albany: on the third day arrived at the Venebergh, and from thence he was fetched with a wagon to Albany. Thus ended this affray. I have myself seen this very Adams, and have the relation from his own mouth, together with the confirmation of several of the old Schoharie people.

After this circumstance, the Schoharie people got very shy to go to Albany—made the practice to send their wives for salt, or not to enter Albany but on Sundays, and then out again. This the seven partners well observed, held themselves quiet, till after a while got them tame, so that they supposed all was now again at rest, when at a time, a pretty good drove happened to come down after salt. The seven partners had their sheriff and posse ready, took every one of them, and clapped them to jail.—The most notorious were put in the dungeon, among whom was young Conradt Wiser.

This news like lightning, went through all Schoharie, and alarmed them to the highest degree; and in their rage resolved to delegate old Mr. Conradt Wiser to England, to obtain redress for their grievances, and to have amends made for their frequent and several abuses, also praying the King for future safe protection. Young Conradt Wiser soon got tired of his dungeon, resolved to agree to take a lease and pay rent; so did all the rest that were in jail. But before they were permitted to leave their confinement, they were compelled to witness, swear and sign the whole of their conduct and transaction in the cause of Adams and Bayard. This done, they were permitted to depart home in peace, bewailing their misery as they went, whilst the seven partners carefully, and with all convenient speed made the whole business known to King and Parliament.

Old Conradt Wiser now arrived at England with his petition, and went to lay it before the King and Parliament, in order to solicit the desired redress. But Oh! how was he there mortified, when he found the King and Parliament fully informed, from Bayard's mission down to the

cruel and unlawful dealing with the King's officer, the High Sheriff, Mr. Adams. The consequence was, that the Germans of Schoharie, were looked upon as a pack of monstrous outlaws, denying the King's legal authority, and ought to be treated as such: and old Mr. Wiser was clapped into the Tower, where he had to remain one whole year, before he got out with permission to return to America again.

But for being murderously disappointed and fully beat at last, got so embittered against the seven partners, that many, together with Wiser, concluded to leave Schoharie, in order to get rid of their troublesome company at once forever.

Conradt Wiser after his return, soon persuaded a great many to leave Schoharie, and seek an asylum under the great William Penn. They marched from Schoharie, a southwest direction, for the Susquehannah, with an Indian guide, together with their cattle and families, where they arrived in a five day's journey, at a place called Cook-house. There they made canoes, so navigated their families down by water: their cattle followed by land all along the shore, until they arrived in Pennsylvania, at a place called Tolpelrahen. There they all settled on a large brook, called in the German Muehlback, in the English Milbrook, where some of their descendants dwell unto this day. Here I must remark a curious instance, namely: twelve of their horses run away, and in 18 months after, ten of them arrived in good health and strength in Schoharie, a distance no less than 300 miles.

By this time the people had learnt to buy their land of the seven partners peaceably; but began to get a little wiser: next made Indian purchases and took Indian deeds for large tracts, then went to the governor and council to obtain their letters patent. The governor and council who understood themselves, very well too, were not apt to grant any patents, before they had secured a good slice to themselves, or some of their friends.

At or about the year 1759, Sir William Johnson became the King's Jack or agent, with full powers, not to permit an Indian purchase to be legal, unless it was made in his

presence and with his approbation, who would always take care not to be fool himself, commonly made himself sure of the first cut; and if you could not make him your friend, the Indians would sell you no land at all.

From this time, wild land laid out in lots, would sell from four to twenty shillings an acre, according to quality or convenience of roads or nearness of settlement. Until the year 1786, it got up to five dollars an acre; and by 1817, it will command on an average, from ten dollars up to twenty-five. This must be understood of the upland only; whereas the flats or lowlands of Queen Anne, first mentioned, will sell on an average from one hundred to one hundred and fifty dollars.

Now I must take notice of the great Schoharie creek, which springs out of a swamp, south of Schoharie, back in the Blue Mountains, and runs most northerly, until it empties in the Mohawk river at Fort Hunter, about eighty or ninety miles from the place where it first begins. It contains the most and best flats and intervals in this state, perhaps the great Genessee river might be excepted.—Here are flats unbroken, of fourteen hundred acres of low land. It is generally speaking, a grain country, more so than a grass country.

I shall now take notice of some of the waters feeding the Schoharie creek, in order to mention of waters, mines and minerals; as also of the prospects I have heard of, together with the products I have seen.

And first, I shall begin in the south with Red creek, running from east to west, through a place called Batavia, I suppose now a town of some name or other, in the county of Green, on which, it was supposed about sixty years ago, that there was a gold mine in a rock; consequently, a small insignificant company of old countrymen undertook to dig; and as they were a blasting, they came on a run of water dripping from the rock and dried by the sun, appeared to be the best Spanish green. Now a division came between them: some were for following the water, and others for blasting deeper. The consequence was, that the party for following the water, broke off. The other party kept the work until they got through the rock,

where they found nothing but low land soil; there it ended, and the last French war begun. This relation I have personally of one of the workmen.

Next I shall take notice of Plattekill, just below what was called Diees Manner, now in the town of Bristol, where there is an inexhaustible quarry of stone, for grindstone; and hundreds are made there now, equal to any imported.

Thirdly. I shall mention Minekill and Mine patent, so called, because the Indians would sometimes bring silver ore from there. However, they would never discover the very spot where they got it, as also because copper ore was there found: for that reason a patent of 5,000 acres was taken to cover this ground. Samples of this copper ore, may be seen at the Court-House, with Judge Bouck at this day.

On the west side of the Schoharie creek, nearly opposite the Court-House, at the beginning of the revolutionary war, a mine was opened by one Mr. Stout, a chemister, of Hessian Castle, under the superintendence of the Provincial Congress, in order to make brimstone; who made 1700 weight in a winter. He also made what they call English salt, out of a kind of black slate, which he found there in abundance. Some say that he made a great many of our old sort of coppers; but for this I have no proof.

From hence proceeds a rocky and ledgy country, for several miles backwards, and ends in and about the town of Warren, in Herkimer county; all in a distance from twelve to twenty miles, south of the Mohawk River. The stones are chiefly lime, fire-stone, and a kind of a silvery black slate.

In the town of Carlisle, ten miles west from the Schoharie creek, wherein I now reside, and have lived these forty-five years, are brimstone waters; the spring may be smelt for miles distant. The great brimstone spring in the town of Sharon, and brimstone hill in Cherry-Valley, are remarkable for this. In this town, are also found samples of plaster of Paris, and there are also discovered signs of sea coal. It is also said, that some of our Bear swamps contain as good Marl and Turf, as any in Ireland.

Schoharie creek cannot afford any profitable water navigation, but affords many good places for water machinery, and is very scant of fish. I have now gone through as far as I understood, the Circular Letter, and shall now dismiss the subject, well knowing it merits no great praise. If any be bettered, and if any be benefitted by my information, it shall suffice. Finally, I have my reward, and let it go for what it will fetch.

Postscript.—With this request, that if ever any should come to print, that some better hand should put it in a better dress, as to grammar and phraseology. As to the facts herein contained, they are plain in my memory and knowledge. Once more finally, I have taken no time to make corrections.

I am, with much esteem,

Dear Sir, your most
obedient humble servant.

(Signed.)

JOHN M. BROWN.

TO MR. DE WITT CLINTON.

Carlisle, County of Schoharie, March 10th, 1816.

I have been thinking of you very much lately
and wondering how you are getting on.
I hope you are well and happy.
I have been very busy lately
but I have managed to find some time
to write you a few lines.
I hope you will excuse my
writing so late.

I am very much
I hope you will
I am very much
I hope you will

I am very much
I hope you will
I am very much
I hope you will

NOTES.

May 18th. Since the above was finished, it is almost reduced to a certainty, that there is and must be, an inexhaustible *bed of Stone Coal* in this town, in the place called New Rhinbeck, where there is a very remarkable high and round hill separate from all strings of hills, and can be seen over all our mountains, and by the Indians called Owelus Sowlus. The meaning I do not understand.

If any particulars of some heads should be desired, I shall have no objection to give the explanation that I am capable of, being alive and well. I shall continue now to relate the reasons of some old occurrences, and names of the county of Schoharie. It must then be remarked, that the Germans, when settling, settled all in towns, which in their language was called a Dorff, and is no more but a compact farmer's settlement, distinguished from a village, which they call a Flekken, in distinction from an incorporated city, which they call a Stadt.

Now these towns were all named after their several list men, as they were by them called, to wit: Conradt Wiser, Hartman Wintekker, Johannes George Smidt, William Fox, Elias Garlack, and John Henrich Kerterskern. These list men, were each of them, furnished with a list of a certain number of men, women and children, and were, in a manner, their commissioners from the Queen, in order to draw provision from her royal stores. These commissioners or rather list men, continued to draw provisions, each for their certain number, whilst they encamped and wintered in ground huts at East and West Camp; and continued so till in the spring, when they arrived at Albany.— But after they went to Schoharie, I did not learn that they ever drew any more; if they did, it was probably no more than what they could carry on their backs to Schoharie.

As it is very natural to suppose, that these men, women and children, would keep nigh to their list men, with those in particular to whose list they did in particular belong, and settle with them in a city form, so that they might be the better ready to assist each other against the unruly temper of their Indian neighbors, who had now after agreement & settlement with Queen Anne, surrendered two of their castles to the Germans, & removed to a third, about a mile above little Schoharie creek, to the west side of the great Schoharie creek, on a great flat, over which Adam Vroman afterwards took a patent for six hundred acres, vested by certain unmoveable boundaries; and when it was afterwards surveyed by the King's surveyor, it proved to contain 1400 acres of full the best low land in all Schoharie. Here they now settled all together; the whole Karigh Ondonte tribe. Their Chiefs, that remained in my time, were Beth, Hansyerry, Josep Hanelic, and Aggy Awner, together with their Squaws, of the direct line of Karigh Ondonte, namely: Lisiquet, Wawly and Catoline, who always pretended to have the exclusive title of the soil, in the very best of this tract they settled; and King George, I suppose, caused a Picquet Fort and some Barracks to be built therein, which was done by one young Johannes Becker, for the sum of eight pounds. Here they gave names to three particular hills, namely:—Onisto Graw, Conegena, and Mohegan, by which they continue to be named this day.

Conradt Wiser, so often named, settled about two miles lower down than this Indian settlement, within an hundred rods of the stump block or boundary thereafter mentioned, (or as the Indians called it, the high water mark, though it was never believed by white men, that the Indians had seen water there, until the year 1784 and 1785, when they witnessed the flood, which had risen four or five feet above the monument of the stump block,) together with all those belonging to his list. Here now they built a farmer's town after the manner of a city, all in streets. This now was the very place where the abuse of Sheriff Adams aforesaid, first begun, and was called Wisersdorp, now in the town of Middleburgh.

At or about two miles lower down to north, Hartman Wintekker and his company, settled and built their town in the same fashion. And I have heard the old people say, that this town consisted of sixty-five houses. Here were the first apple trees planted to an orchard in Schoharie, by Hans Wilhelm Kemmer, and this was called Hart,

man's Dorff. Next down was Brunnendorff, in the English, the town of Springs, or Spring Town, settled chiefly by the men that belonged to Johans Yerry Smidt's list. Here is now the Court and Meeting House, and a village by the name of Somerville, in the town of Schoharie.

Then adjoining Hansyerry Smith, settled together with the remainder of the people, remaining of his list. He had the best house in the town, which was thatched with straw, and at the time when the mob rose against Mr. Bayard, whereof particular mention has been made before. Here is nothing more to observe, but on the low land was an Indian village and burying ground, of which I never saw any thing worthy of remark. This was called Schmit's Dorff.

Next did William Fox settle together with the men of his list. Here a creek comes down from the town of Bern, and runs west till it here falls in the Schoharie creek, and takes his name Foxen Kill, and is a stream on which a good deal of business is done by water; together called Foxendorff.

Then next did Elias Garlock settle together with the men of his list. Here was an Indian castle, though on the west side of the Schoharie creek, in which Lambert Sternbergh raised the first wheat that was ever raised in Schoharie. The mighty increase as mentioned before, will be doubtful perhaps, to every reader; yet my informers were many, and of the most credible characters in Schoharie: and here it was called Gerbach's Dorff.

And lastly, did John Peter Kniskern settle together with the men of his list; and he is the only one of all the list men, whose offspring remained in his town to this day. And this was called Kniskern's Dorff. Opposite to this town, Cobleskill creek falls in the great Schoharie creek, so called after the name of a certain man who cleared a spot at the outlet, under pretence of building a mill thereon, but never was brought to pass; but by the Indians was called Ostgawawe. Up this creek, are found veins of brimstone ore, running through the rocks in the bottom of the creek. Further up lies the town, called by the same name. This creek first springs in the highest ground in the town of Wooster, between Schoharie and the Susquehannah. At this same place, where the Scenegers creek before made mention of, springs and runs to the southwest and empties into the Susquehannah river.

This Cobleskill creek in the town of the same name, is fed by another stream or creek, springing at East Hill, in the town of Cherry-Valley, and runs the whole length through the town of New Dorlach, formerly so called from the name of the place, the first four settlers came from in Wertenberg, Germany, who settled there in the last French war. Their names were Earnast Fitz, Michael Merkele, Christopher Merkele, and Sebastian Frantz, who came from Germany in the year 1752; but is altered by a law of this state, to the name of Sharon. This creek is by us called West creek, but by the Indians was called Anuntodawse. The stream is very useful to the town, and a good deal of business now done thereon. These towns are also very productive, yet somewhat more frosty than Schoharie. In this last town towards the northwest corner, is a strong spring of brimstone waters, so that it may be smelt at miles distant.

Towards the north of Cobleskill, and east of Sharon, is the town of Carlisle, in which I now live, first called New Rhinebeck, after the name of the place, one of the first settlers came from. Here is the noted Skeel or Hill, by the Indians called Owevus Sownes, a name known by all the western Indian nations, and is by us supposed to contain stone coal. This town contains also Turf and Marl Swamps, together with samples of plasters.

INDIAN WARS.

None occurred in my time. One relation I shall, however, simply mention; and that is of the last battle between the Mohegan and Mohawk nations, namely: They were a fighting, which nation of them should have the King, or rather, which nation should have the preference, as will more fully appear by the relation, to wit:—Both nations had collected all their strength, and met for a deciding battle at or near Wanton Island, in Hudson river, immediately opposite to East Camp, where they fought a pitched battle for a whole day. The Mohawks, finding the Mohegans rather too tough for them, thought on a stratagem before night; so took a sudden flight, and went up the river, till they came to an Island to which they could wade; and when they were on, they kindled a great number of fires; cut brushes & laid them all around their fires, covering them with their blankets. The Mohegans, in fresh pursuit, after

seeing these fires, concluded to give them a night attack : and after midnight, waded over also, and with the greatest care and silence, beset all their fires ; and at a certain signal given, poured all the contents of their artillery into the blankets and brushes around the fires. They perceiving very little motion or this effect, concluded that they had killed every Mohawk around the fires ; then run up with tomahawks and scalping knives in hand, accompanied with their Indian yells, fell a cutting and slashing on the blankets and bushes. The Mohawks all this time lay flat on the ground, a small distance from their fires ; then arose and threw all their murdering contents in upon the Mohegans, killed the most of them, and took all the rest prisoners, with whom they concluded a treaty. This battle and the treaty, forever subjected the Mohegans to the Mohawks ; and the Mohawks got the King of their nation, whose name was Henry. This Indian king lived to a great age ; and if my memory be correct, he lost his life in Dedemus Maginness battle, at Lake George, in the French war. He was on the British side, when the French attempted to take Fort George of Sir William Johnson.

The articles of this treaty were this : that the Mohawks should have the king and that the Mohegans should not have the honour of men, by wearing breeches, and that the oldest Mohegans should reverence the Mohawks, from the oldest down to the first born baby, by calling it aunt or uncle. Of this article, I am myself full positive, as having seen the operations in a good manner thereof.

MANUFACTORIES.

In the year 1765, or thereabouts, the first piece for fulling, was made in Schoharie by George Conrad Richtmyer, and carried to Esopus on horseback, to John Dubois' tulling mill, to be full'd. Then many began to follow his example, till after the revolutionary war, fulling mills were erected on the Mohawk river. But at this time, we have Manufactories in the county, full as much as we want.

SCHOOLS.

Common Schools have been, and are still greatly neglected : though by the description of schools I have given in the first page, they are very much improved, so that by this time, it is owing more to parents in the bad or evil bringing up of their children, than in the want of schools, on which I shall give a comment.

SEASONS.

This year, 1816, was the most uncommon season for cold, and even snow on the 6th of June. Ice froze in almost every month of the year ; wheat, pease, and oats, however, done very well : corn totally cut off, and buckwheat, very slim. The year 1756, was the same year, when Oswego was taken by the French from the English, and came up the night to this year I ever saw. However, corn was saved that year, and we had five very fruitful seasons following. The years 1784 and '85, were the most remarkable for overflowings.

GRAIN.

Schoharie in general, is more a grain than a grass country. It is, however, in a great measure declined. The pea bug had made its appearance, as I have been told, eighty or ninety years ago, but did depart again. About nineteen years ago, they made us another visit, and troubled us for several years, so that we despaired of raising peas ; but now seem entirely to have left us, and we raise them again about as good as ever. The Hessian fly or insect, also has been here, but never done a general damage, and now for two years have done us no damage at all.

FOOT-PATHS, HIGHWAYS, and TURNPIKES.

In the year 1712, there were no other roads to Schoharie, but five Indian-foot paths, the first beginning at Catskill, leading up that stream to a large swamp or flyc, where it springs, about seven miles southeast from the stamp block, or boundary monument of Queen Anne's patent before mentioned, the Lonenburg turnpike now following that same route. The Lonenburg turnpike continues on to Wiersdorff through Schoharie, Cobleskill, and Sharon, until it intersects the Great Western Turnpike, in the town of Cherry Valley, in the county of Otsego.

The second, beginning at Albany, led over the Helleberg, which is the most northerly point, or the end of that notable hill called the Blue Mountains. Thence on westerly, until it struck Foxenkill, and thence down the stream into Schoharie, at Foxendorff. This was the road which the first settlers travelled, when they moved up into Schoharie. On this route, with but very little variation, went the first Schoharie

road to Albany. I did not however, learn that any wagon went through that way, before the year 1750, or thereabout, when the farmers began, six, eight, or ten together, and made one trip to Albany, with a wagon, in order to get their rum, pepper and tea, for harvest. They had no other road for market, until the year 1762, when a new road was opened from Foxendoff, through Duaneburgh, intersecting the old Schenectady road at the half way house, at Truax's. The third Indian footpath, beginning at Gerlachdoff, leading through Duaneburgh to Schenectady lowland, whereof before is made mention of. So with that, they went sometimes twenty men, women and children in a drove, each a grist on his head or on his back, to Schenectady lowland, to get ground.

The fourth took its start from Kniskernsdoff, leading down the Schoharie creek to Fort Hunter. This was for the most part travelled but by the Indians, for relationship of the Karigh Ondonte family. They also sometimes travelled through Schoharie to the Susquehannah, to a place called by the Indians, Awquawge, where the first Gospel was taught unto the Indians, by one Elisha Gan.

The last also took its beginning at Kniskernsdoff, and led farther up the river, into Canajoharie, and struck just above Anthony's nose, in order to have a higher cut to the upper castle, at or near the Little Falls. This foot path has been much travelled by the Gerinans; in the summers for most part, on barefoot: yet in my time, by the people of Schoharie, and the people of the German Flats, on account of connections, friends and relations. This foot path continued in full use in the year 1762, at a time when Sir William Johnson held a general review of the Schenectady Brigade of Militia, at the upper castle, and had there an ox roasted whole, the first I ever heard or saw.

1817. Now we have sufficient turnpikes in lieu of Indian roads, going through the county of Schoharie, and very likely, more of them than will be able to maintain themselves, from the toll they will raise these many years.

THE COMMENT and CONCLUSION.

For this, I shall now for the first, remark, that there never was a philosophic institution, but for the sole purpose of making men wiser, better, and consequently, more happy. A great argument, that mankind is, and always was corrupt, and that there is a probability of mending; so far this is all very right, and a duty on all to pursue. But none brought it to any thing like perfection; neither did any ever find perfect satisfaction therein, even for himself at all, as the writings of them, yea the very best of them, when considered, prove to a demonstration. But the philosophy of Jesus Christ, if I may so call it, or the religion of the Son of God, has infinitely far overwent them all. His Gospel plan has proved the only one, wherein perfect satisfaction ever was found. That word of the great I AM, his revealed will in the Gospel, has bro't this to pass like a wonder, so that all the world is indebted that there is any such thing in it, as perfect satisfaction at all.

The wise man Solomon, has given us one rule, among a great many others, which, if well attended to, would gain us a very great march, towards this perfect satisfaction. The rule is simply this: Teach a child in the way he must go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it. Simple and short as it is, it is of an infinite length, and extends to all Governors and Legislators, rulers, civil and ecclesiastical, officers of all kind, parents, teachers and guardians; none are exempt from this rule. For the neglect and inattention of this rule, children grow up in raw nature, totally uncultivated, and from the next society, as surely they must. Well, if Solomon be correct, as we have no doubt but he is, from whence have we to expect, or ever have reason to expect, that future generations shall be better, or become more happy than the present? Perhaps I might here get the answer of one of their blind philosophers, who wrote and said, that the common law of the land, was the perfect rule of happiness. Ay, but if the way the law should go, or rather those that execute it, has never been brought to their sight, you will certainly fail.

Well, say they then, we will go to the Gospel. Very right, Messrs. But do you know what the Gospel is, or where to find it, since you never learned nor cared about it? Well, say you then, we shall go to our Gospel ministers, teachers and school masters. Truly, very well again; but should it prove true what the same wise man says in another place, to wit: The labour of the fool tired every body, for he knoweth not himself the way to the city. Then it will be up with you again: up, say they,

up, it is all over, up with you. I say no, no, go on; don't despair, you may yet mend your matter in your own way. You can neither read nor write, nor fit or useful for civil society; but just fit for a soldier, the machine of murder, and to follow drum and fife to victory. After victory perchance, take the cat on your naked back: once in a while, be shot perhaps for a villain, then you have complete full satisfaction in your own way at last.

This altogether can proceed, and I have no doubt, but very often proceeds from the want and neglect of teaching a child the way he should go; just as much, and as many as similar instances occur, so many witnesses we have, that the position is true.

Well, if all this be in any way correct, how great must not then the obligation be, of all those whose duty it is in particular to see to it, that youth may be taught that wisdom which is after Godliness, and is profitable in this life, and the life to come;—and shocking must be the judgment that will fall on each head guilty of this neglect. A general evil cannot be averted, but must break in like a mighty flood, no aim to save nor eye to pity; for then there will be no peace to him that goeth out, nor to him that cometh in; but great vexations upon all the inhabitants of the countries, and nation will be destroyed of nation, and city of city, for the Lord will vex them with all adversity—says the prophet by the word of the Lord our God.



